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TWO HITHERTO UNRECORDED SPECIMENS OF THE NOISY SCRUB-BIRD, *ATRICHORNIS CLAMOSUS* (GOULD)

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Major Whittell (1943) in his survey of extant museum specimens of the Noisy Scrub-bird (*Atrichornis clamosus*) came to a total of 18 skins, of which 10 were in Australia, 6 in the United States, and 2 in England. At the time the war prevented enquiries on the continent of Europe.

Though the recent rediscovery of the species has in a fortunate way caused the importance of old museum specimens to decrease, it is nevertheless of interest to place on record that the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie possesses two mounted individuals. These birds are not in a very good condition and, like so many specimens in the old collection, are insufficiently labelled. Such data as are available will be presented here.

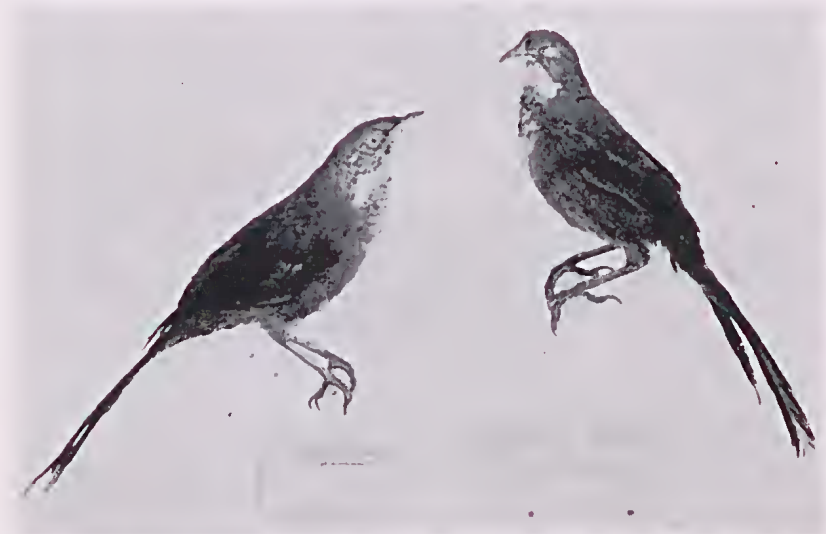
The specimen shown on the left, though clearly the older one, is in the better condition. It is undated, and there is no indication of its origin. Underneath the sole is written, in a handwriting unknown to me, "George Sound" and "♂"; in a different handwriting the name "*Dasyornis*." Finally, in the handwriting of van Oort (curator, later director of the Leiden Museum from 1904-1933) the correct identification is given: "*Atrichia clamosa* (G.)." On the card shown on the photograph, which has doubtless been copied from the information given on the sole, the words "*Dasyornis* . . . Gould" and "George-Sound" appear in ink; the name *Dasyornis* is crossed out with pencil and below it is written "*Atrichia clamosa*," in what looks like the handwriting of Büttikofer (curator, 1884-1897). Measurements are: wing 74, tail 90, tarsus, 26½, culmen 18½ mm.

The second specimen (right hand figure) bears on its stand only the name "*Atrichia clamosa*" and the words "Frank 1881," which

indicate that the bird had been received in that year from the well-known dealer Frank. There are traces of some older writing, that has been rubbed out, but can be deciphered: "*Acrocephalus longirostris*," hence an erroneous identification without further interest. The card gives the same information: "*Atrichia clamosa*, Gould, Frank, 1881, Australie." The locality "Australie" is clearly a secondary one, added not because anything about the provenance of the specimen was known, but because the species occurs in Australia. There is no indication of sex, though the bird is clearly a male. Measurements are: wing 79, tail 98 (the tail shows heavy moult and only one feather is full-grown), tarsus 26, culmen 19.

Since the specimens have historical rather than scientific value, I have made a fairly exhaustive search in our archives, in an attempt to find information of their provenance.

The undated bird has a card with a red edge, of the kind that was used during the directorate of Temminck (director, 1820-1858) and the first years of the directorate of Sehlegel (director, 1858-1884). Unfortunately, though for many years lively relations, including the exchange of large numbers of birds, existed with Gould, the archives are very incomplete, and of many exchanges no documentary evidence is left. Therefore it is not surprising that I have failed to find any mention of *Atrichornis clamosus*. Nevertheless, as it is evident that the specimen had been received before about 1865, it must belong to the series collected by Gilbert in 1843 (see Whittell, 1942) and therefore had doubtless been received from Gould. In view of this it may cause wonder that the bird has not been identified, but extant lists show that Gould quite often sent material of as yet unnamed species.



Mounted specimens of *Atrichornis clamosus* in the Leiden Museum.

Supporting evidence is supplied by a mounted Bristle-bird, *Dasyornis brachypterus longirostris*, which has the locality George Sound in exactly the same handwriting as that on the stand of the Noisy Scrub-bird, and has its name in the handwriting of Temminck. It is likely that this bird had been received with the same consignment. A second specimen of *Dasyornis brachypterus longirostris* is probably one appearing on an exchange list in Gould's own handwriting, dated Nov. 9, 1850.

Gould never mentioned how many specimens of *Atrichornis clamosus* were obtained by Gilbert, but it seems that there were more than the original one from Drakesbrook and the three shipped per "Beagle" and "Napoleon" (Whittell, 1942: 303). Gould's (1865: 345) words: "The examples forwarded to me . . . were all males" suggest that there were more than four.

As mentioned above, the second bird is marked as having been purchased from Frank in 1881. The name *Atrichia clamosa* does not appear anywhere in the lists of material purchased in that year, but there is a post of "two birds from Western Australia," for which the sum of £. 4 (about 10/-) was paid. At 5/- even a rather poor *Atrichornis* would seem a bargain.

Though it must be kept in mind that in 1880 Frank obtained the Eyton collection, from which the British Museum acquired a specimen of *Atrichornis clamosus*, I regard it as much more likely that Frank had received his bird from William Webb, who at the time was actively engaged in collecting and doubtless had his connections abroad.

While we must not judge the activities of our predecessors by present day standards, we may certainly regret that up to comparatively recent times original data were regarded as the least important part of a zoological object. It is quite likely that many specimens in our collection have never been properly labelled. Of others the original labels were removed when, on arrival in the museum, the skins were mounted. In a later period, which in this museum extended into this century, a sense of tidiness apparently required uniformity, so that original labels were removed and replaced by museum labels. It is rare indeed in the Leiden collection to find old specimens with original collector's labels.

Finally a word about the way the birds have been mounted; the erect position of the body, and the almost drooping tail will strike the privileged few who have seen the species alive as unnatural, the normal posture of the birds being with horizontal body and more or less cocked tail. Naturally one cannot blame European preparators of a century ago for not knowing what a Noisy Scrub-bird looks like alive.

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